

MARVEL
COMICS



APR
#7

THE NEXT GENERATION
OF AVENGERS!

AVENGERS
NEXT™

APPROVED
BY THE
COMICS
CODE
AUTHORITY

AT LAST!
WE REVEAL
THE
SECRET
OF...

...**MAINFRAME!**

BONUS FEATURE!
"THE LAST
DAYS OF THE
ORIGINAL
AVENGERS!"

DEVALCO
FRENZ
MILGROM

WWW.MARVEL.COM

STAN LEE
PRESENTS:

A NEXT AFTER THE FALL

TOM DEFALCO &
RON FRENZ
--WORDS / PLOT /
PENCILS

AL MILGROM
--FINISHED ART

JIM NOVAK
--CALLIGRAPHY

BOB SHAREN
--COLOR ARTIST

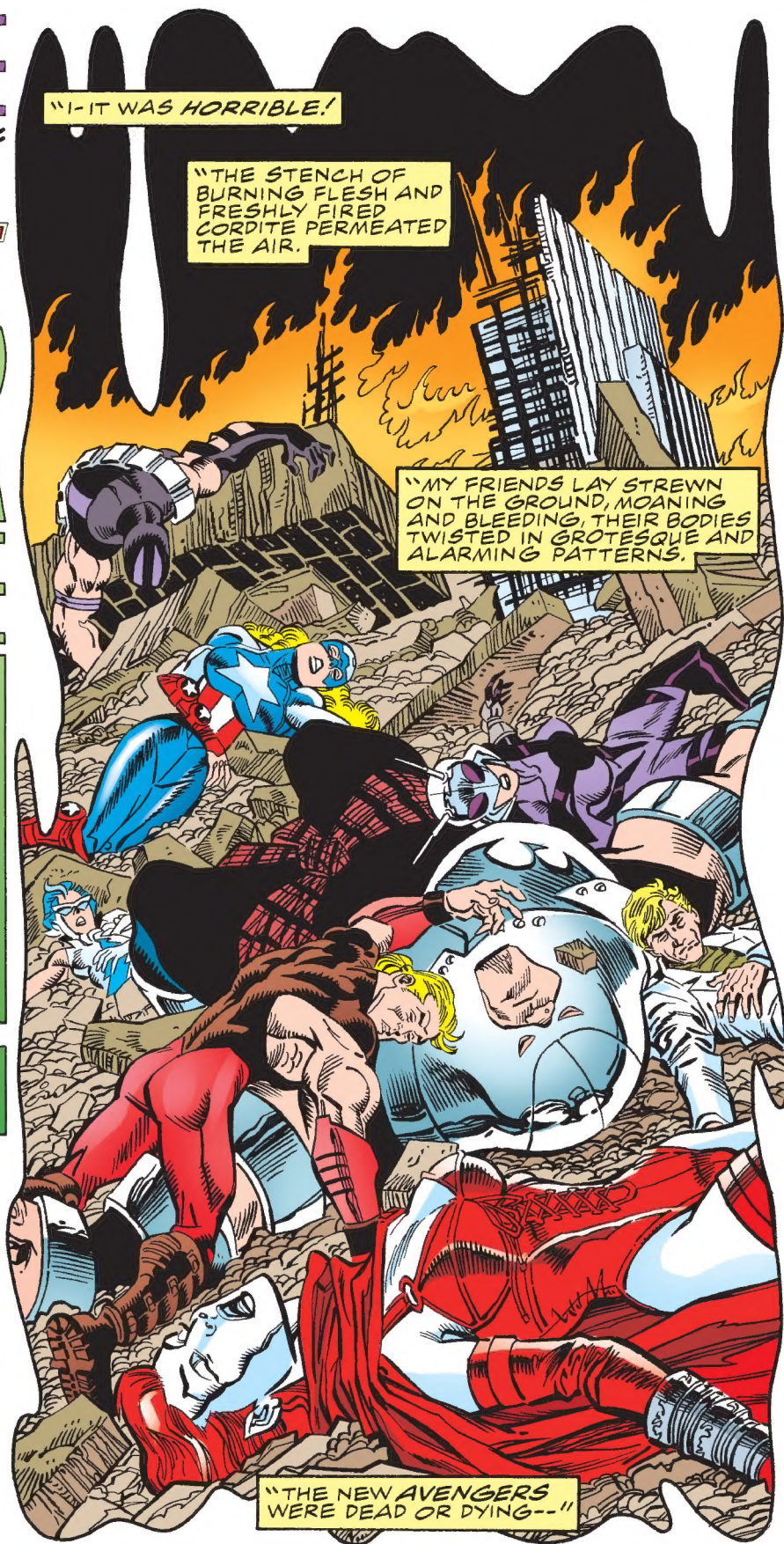
BOB HARRAS
--SYNTHOID IN
CHIEF

"I-IT WAS HORRIBLE!"

"THE STENCH OF
BURNING FLESH AND
FRESHLY FIRED
CORDITE PERMEATED
THE AIR."

"MY FRIENDS LAY STREWN
ON THE GROUND, MOANING
AND BLEEDING, THEIR BODIES
TWISTED IN GROTESQUE AND
ALARMING PATTERNS."

"THE NEW AVENGERS
WERE DEAD OR DYING--"





--AND THERE WAS NOTHING I COULD DO!

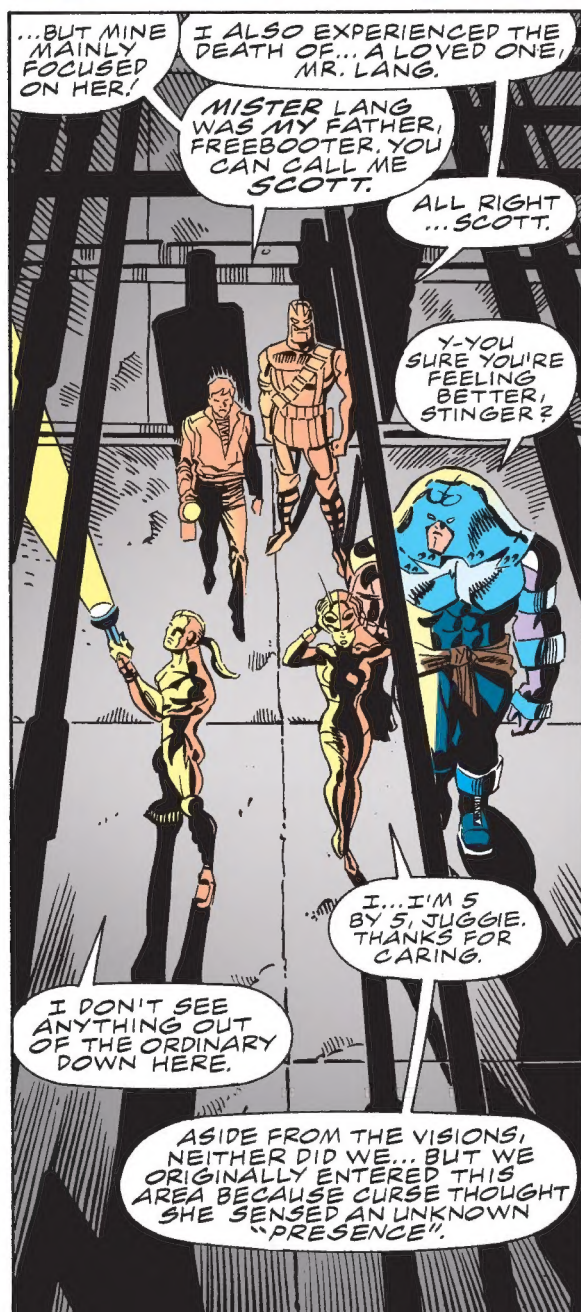
AND YOU SAW THAT VISION WHEN YOU REACHED THIS SUB-BASEMENT WITH YOUR FATHER, FREEBOOTER AND CRIMSON CURSE?*

THAT'S RIGHT, THUNDERSTRIKE.

WEIRD! I KNOW IT'S ALL PART OF AVENGERS COMPOUND, BUT THIS PLACE CREEPS ME OUT!

CASSIE ISN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO HAD A HALLUCINATION...

*AS SHOWN LAST ISSUE!



...BUT MINE MAINLY FOCUSED ON HER!

I ALSO EXPERIENCED THE DEATH OF... A LOVED ONE, MR. LANG.

MISTER LANG WAS MY FATHER, FREEBOOTER. YOU CAN CALL ME SCOTT.

ALL RIGHT ...SCOTT.

Y-YOU SURE YOU'RE FEELING BETTER, STINGER?

I...I'M 5 BY 5, JUGGIE. THANKS FOR CARING.

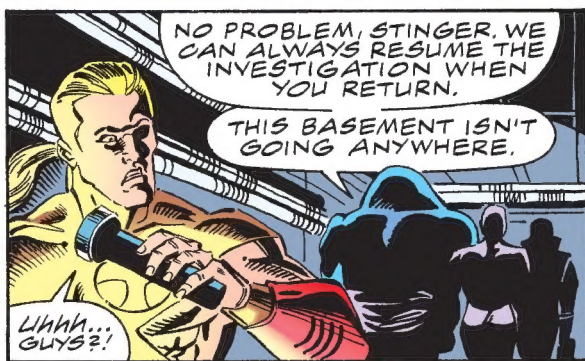
I DON'T SEE ANYTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY DOWN HERE.

ASIDE FROM THE VISIONS, NEITHER DID WE... BUT WE ORIGINALLY ENTERED THIS AREA BECAUSE CURSE THOUGHT SHE SENSED AN UNKNOWN "PRESENCE".



I DON'T BELIEVE IN GHOSTS, BUT SOMETHING MUST HAVE CAUSED--UH-OH! I JUST NOTICED THE TIME.

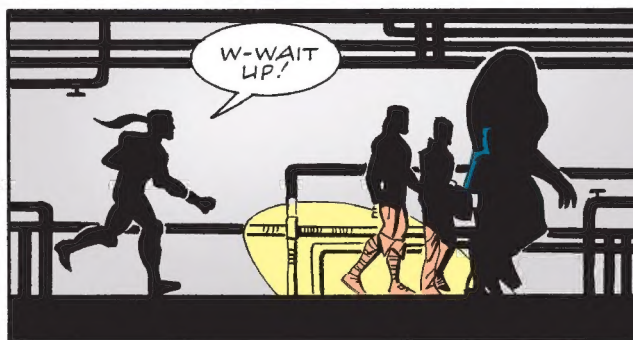
HATE TO CUT THIS SHORT, GANG, BUT MY DAD AND I NEED TO SCOOT. WE HAVE AN IMPORTANT BUSINESS MEETING.



NO PROBLEM, STINGER. WE CAN ALWAYS RESUME THE INVESTIGATION WHEN YOU RETURN.

THIS BASEMENT ISN'T GOING ANYWHERE.

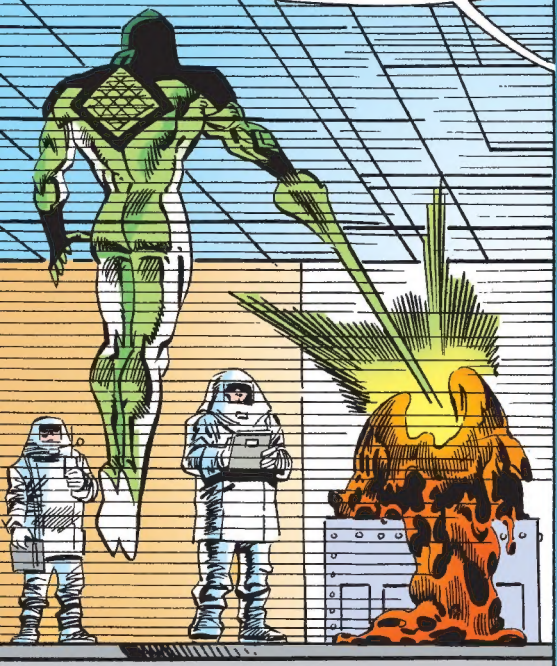
Uhhh... GUYS?!



W-WAIT UP!

EVEN AS THUNDERSTRIKE REJOINS HIS FELLOW AVENGERS, WE'LL QUICKLY JUMP TO A NEW SCENE...

CONGRATULATIONS, MY FRIEND...

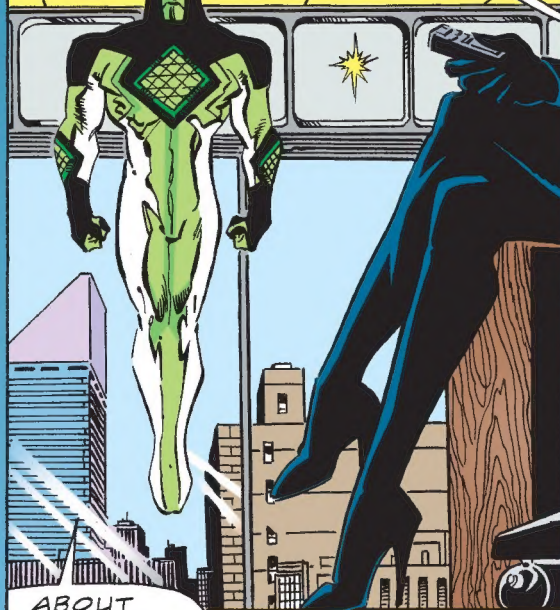


THE VIDEO CLEARLY SHOWS THAT YOU HAVE FINALLY MASTERED YOUR NEW POWERS.

I AM MY POWERS, BOSS LADY... ALTHOUGH YOU ALMOST MAKE ME WISH I WERE STILL HUMAN.

KLIK!

FORGET THE FLATTERY, AND CONCENTRATE ON YOUR MISSION, ION MAN.

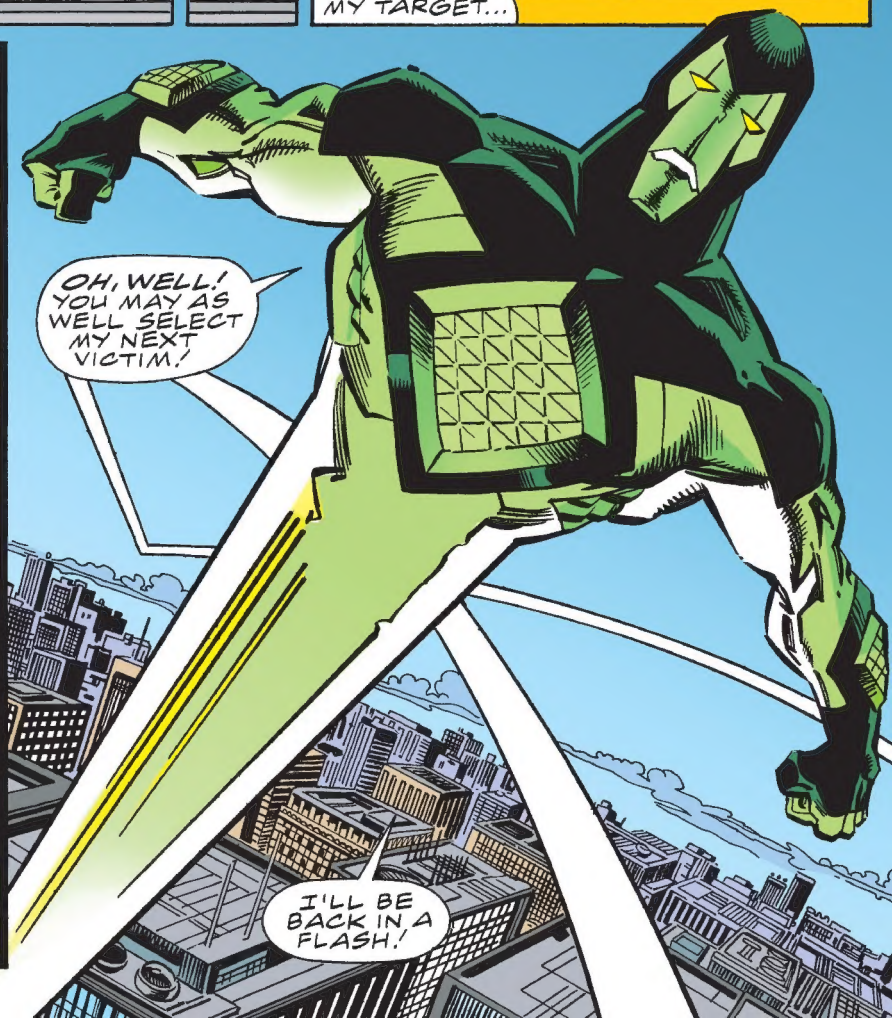


ABOUT MY TARGET...

I THOUGHT I'D GET ONE OF THE NEW AVENGERS, BUT I ENDED UP WITH DR. CASSANDRA LANG.

ACCORDING TO MY SOURCES, SHE HAS VERY CLOSE TIES WITH STINGER.

OH, WELL! YOU MAY AS WELL SELECT MY NEXT VICTIM!



Y-YOU MEAN THE ONE WHO SIMULATES INSECT-LIKE POWERS?

LIKE SHE'LL BE A CHALLENGE!

I'LL BE BACK IN A FLASH!

MEANWHILE, BACK AT AVENGERS
COMPOUND...

YOU KNOW
CURSE BETTER
THAN WE DO,
FREEBOOTER.

ANY CHANCE SHE
ACCIDENTALLY
CAUSED THE
HALLUCINATIONS?

NONE! WHILE I DON'T
CLAIM TO HAVE THE
SLIGHTEST UNDERSTAND-
ING OF HOW AERIKA
MANIPULATES THE
FORCES OF NATURE--

SO! CASSIE
IS RIGHT!
YOU ARE
SPYING ON
THE REST
OF US!

NONSENSE! I MERELY
HAVE EXCELLENT
HEARING.

WHERE IS STINGER?
IT IS TIME WE HAD A
LITTLE CHAT.

SHE AND SCOTT
HAD TO RETURN
TO THEIR
PRIVATE LAB.

THEN THAT'S WHERE
I WILL JOIN THEM.

-- SHE'S
REAL
GOOD
AT IT!

QUIET DOWN, GUYS! HERE
COMES MAINFRAME--!

WHAT'S WITH YOU,
JUGGIE? WHY ARE YOU
ALWAYS SO JUMPY
AROUND HIM?

STINGER
DOESN'T TRUST
HIM... AND
NEITHER
DO I!

THAT IS
THE VERY
SUBJECT I
WISH TO
DISCUSS
WITH MISS
LANG.

Y-YOU
HEARD
ME--?!

BUT,
MAINFRAME,
WE NEED TO
DISCUSS THE
SIGHTINGS
IN THE
BASEMENT--

--AND TO DEBRIEF THE
REST OF THE TEAM ABOUT
OUR RECENT RUN-IN
WITH HERCULES!*

AND YOU PROMISED
TO DOWNLOAD THE
ENCRYPTED FILES
ABOUT THE LAST DAYS
OF THE ORIGINAL
AVENGERS!

YOU WILL HAVE
TO PROCEED
WITHOUT ME, I
MUST SPEAK
WITH STINGER.

*AGAIN, LAST ISSUE!

Y-YOU THINK WE SHOULD WARN CASS THAT TIN BRITCHES IS ABOUT TO JUMP ALL OVER HER CASE?

NAH! LET THEM SETTLE THEIR OWN DIFFERENCES.

YOU GUYS ASSEMBLE THE OTHERS. I'LL BE ALONG IN A MINUTE.

I CAN'T BELIEVE HOW THINGS HAVE GOTTEN SO FAR OUT OF HAND.

CASSIE AND MAINFRAME HAVE BEEN FUSSING AT EACH OTHER FOR MONTHS, BUT WE CAN'T ALLOW THEM TO DISTRACT US FROM OUR REAL PRIORITIES.

WE RECENTLY LEARNED THAT SOMETHING HAPPENED TO THE ORIGINAL AVENGERS. SOMETHING SO TERRIBLE THAT IT DROVE HERCULES MAD--

--AND I HAVE A HUNCH IT'S RELATED TO WHATEVER'S GOING ON DOWN IN THE BASEMENT!

HERC IS PRESENTLY OFF WITH HIS SON, TRYING TO REGAIN HIS SANITY, BUT IT COULD BE MONTHS OR YEARS BEFORE HE'S COHERENT ENOUGH TO HELP US, AND I DOUBT WE HAVE THAT KIND OF TIME.

MY DAD TOLD ME THAT THERE WAS ONE MAN HE COULD ALWAYS TURN TO WHENEVER HE WAS IN TROUBLE...

ONE MAN WHO KNEW ALL THE SECRETS!

SIR--?

I... THE AVENGERS... NEED YOU.

WE HAVE TO LEARN WHY OUR PREDECESSORS DISBANDED.

I WOULD NEVER IMPOSE UPON YOU, OR ASK YOU TO BETRAY A CONFIDENCE IF IT WEREN'T ABSOLUTELY NECESSARY.

IT WILL BE MY PRIVILEGE TO AID YOU IN ANY WAY I CAN...

EDWIN JARVIS IS ALWAYS READY TO SERVE.

AT THAT VERY MOMENT,
A FEW MILES AWAY...

AS YOU CAN SEE,
GENTLEMEN, WE
ARE A FULL SER-
VICE THINK TANK,
EQUIPPED TO
PROVIDE YOU
WITH A
VARIETY OF
BENEFITS.

TO YOUR LEFT
IS OUR CLEAN
ROOM WHERE
OUR EXPERIENCED
TECHNICIANS
PERFORM
ADVANCED
ELECTRONICS
WORK.

VERY
IMPRES-
SIVE...

YOU HAVEN'T SEEN ANY-
THING YET, MR. YOSHIDO.

I AM ESPECIALLY PROUD
OF OUR BIO-CHEM FACILI-
TIES, WHICH ARE LOCATED
IN THE SOUTH WING.

AS WELL
YOU SHOULD
BE, DOCTOR
LANG.

LANG LABS
SOLUTIONS FOR THE
FUTURE
387

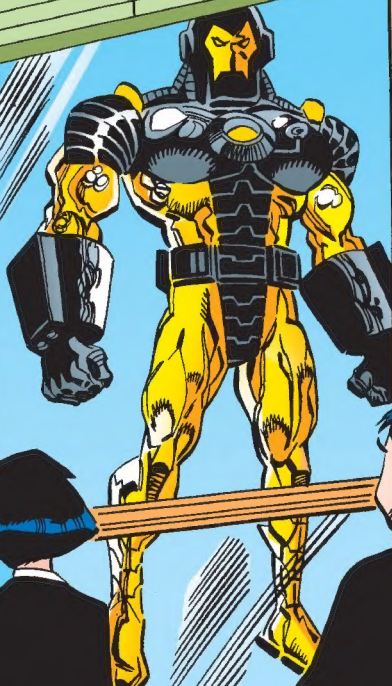
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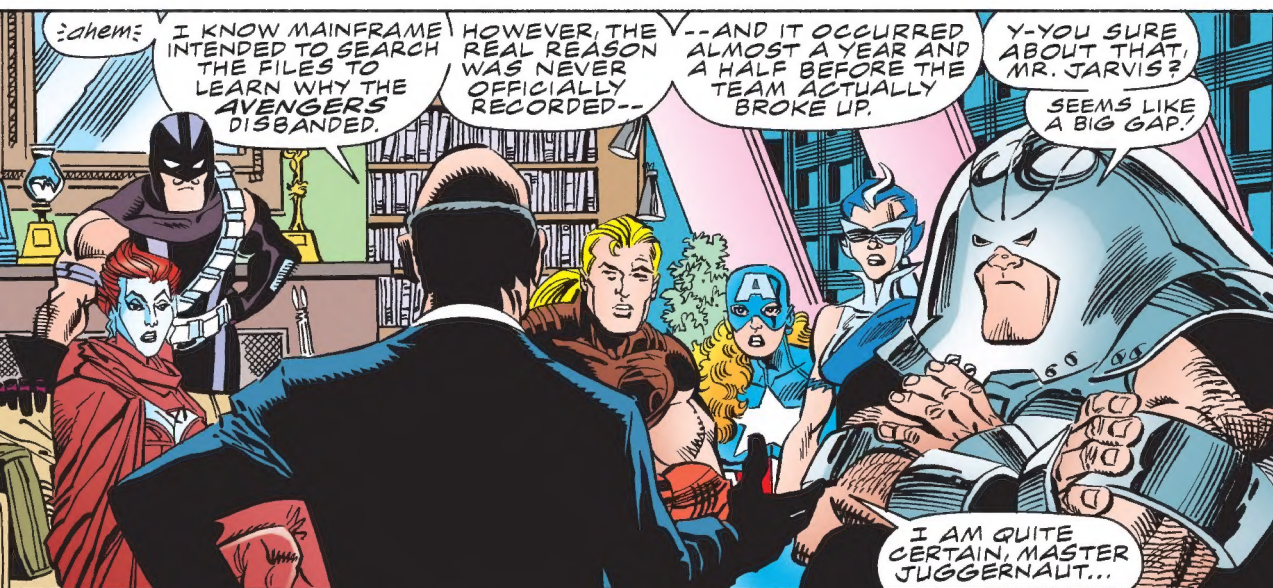
EXCUSE ME, MISS
LANG, BUT YOU HAVE
AN UNEXPECTED
VISITOR WHO
INSISTS ON
SEEING YOU...

OH--!

CAN'T YOU
EXPLAIN THAT
I'M IN THE
MIDDLE OF
SOMETHING,
TIM?

I... I TRIED, MA'AM...
TRULY I DID... BUT
HE CAN BE QUITE
INSISTENT.





ohem=

I KNOW MAINFRAME INTENDED TO SEARCH THE FILES TO LEARN WHY THE AVENGERS DISBANDED.

HOWEVER, THE REAL REASON WAS NEVER OFFICIALLY RECORDED--

--AND IT OCCURRED ALMOST A YEAR AND A HALF BEFORE THE TEAM ACTUALLY BROKE UP.

Y-YOU SURE ABOUT THAT, MR. JARVIS?

SEEMS LIKE A BIG GAP.

I AM QUITE CERTAIN, MASTER JUGGERNAUT...



THOUGH OVER A DECADE HAS PASSED, I WILL NEVER FORGET THAT DAY.

IT BEGAN LIKE ANY OTHER UNTIL I NOTICED A NUMBER OF UNEXPECTED ARRIVALS-- RESERVE MEMBERS AND FRIENDS WHO HADN'T VISITED AVENGERS MANSION IN YEARS.

THAT'S WHEN I FIRST REALIZED THAT THEY WERE RESPONDING TO AN URGENT SUMMONS...

I WANT TO THANK YOU ALL FOR ATTENDING THIS EMERGENCY MEETING.

I'M AFRAID WE MAY BE FACING A MENACE THAT THREATENS OUR ENTIRE WORLD.

WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

QUIET, HAWKEYE! GIVE CAPTAIN AMERICA A CHANCE TO EXPLAIN.

"THOUGH I WAS BUSY SERVING REFRESHMENTS, I COULDN'T HELP BUT OVERHEAR SOME OF THE CONVERSATION."

I DON'T BLAME YOU FOR BEING SKEPTICAL. HARDLY A WEEK GOES BY THAT WE DON'T FACE SOME NEW AND GREATER DANGER.

THIS IS DIFFERENT! IT THREATENS BOTH OUR MOST CHERISHED FREEDOMS AND OUR VERY WORLD--

--AND APPEARS TO WIELD FAR GREATER POWER THAN ALL THE AVENGERS COMBINED!



IF WE DO CHOOSE TO CONFRONT THIS PERIL, IT IS VERY POSSIBLE--MAKE THAT PROBABLE-- THAT MANY OR MOST OF US WILL NOT SURVIVE.

YOU PLANNING TO DELAY THE INEVITABLE BY ASKING FOR A VOTE--

--OR CAN WE JUST SIGN ON NOW?



"MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT THE COURAGE AND NOBILITY OF THE AVENGERS OVER THE YEARS-- SURE, THEY OCCASIONALLY SQUABBLED, AS DO MOST FAMILIES-- BUT THEY ALWAYS PUT THE SAFETY AND WELFARE OF THEIR WORLD WELL ABOVE THEIR OWN."



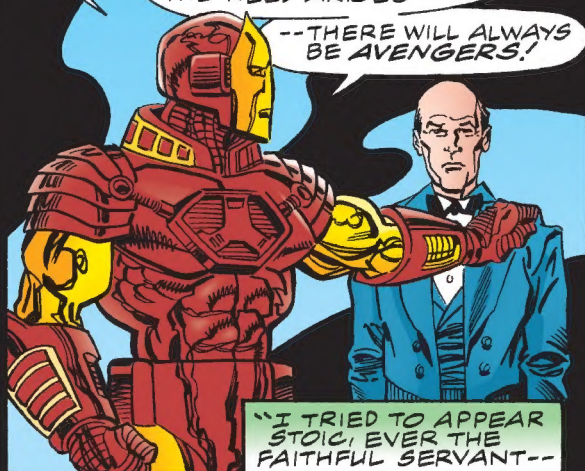
MASTER IRON MAN, SIR, I DON'T MEAN TO OVERSTEP MY BOUNDS BUT WHO OR WHAT ARE YOU ABOUT?

I'M AFRAID THAT MUST REMAIN CLASSIFIED FOR NOW, OLD FRIEND...

BUT YOU NEEDN'T FEAR.

NO MATTER HOW THIS TURNS OUT, I HAVE ALREADY TAKEN THE APPROPRIATE STEPS TO INSURE THAT WHENEVER THE NEED ARISES--

--THERE WILL ALWAYS BE AVENGERS!



"I TRIED TO APPEAR STOIC, EVER THE FAITHFUL SERVANT--

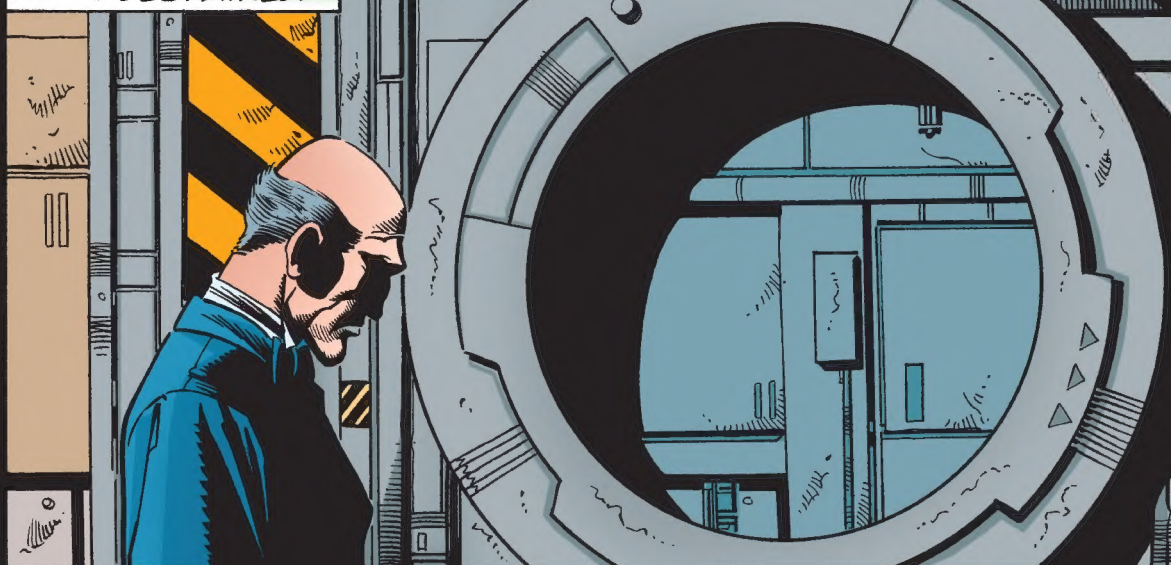
"-- BUT SOMETHING IN HIS DEMEANOR CHILLED MY VERY SOUL!"

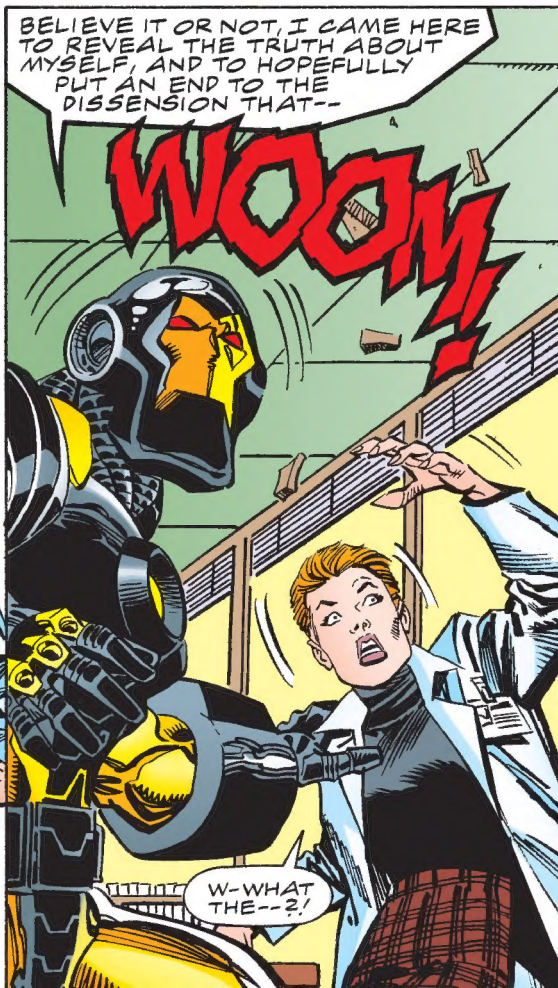
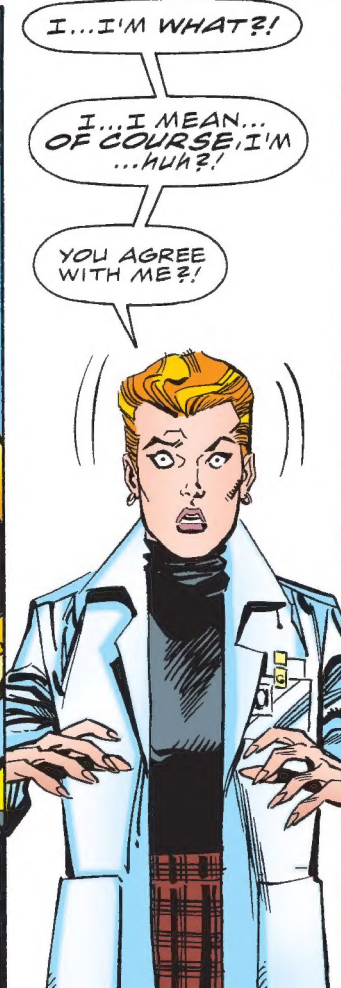
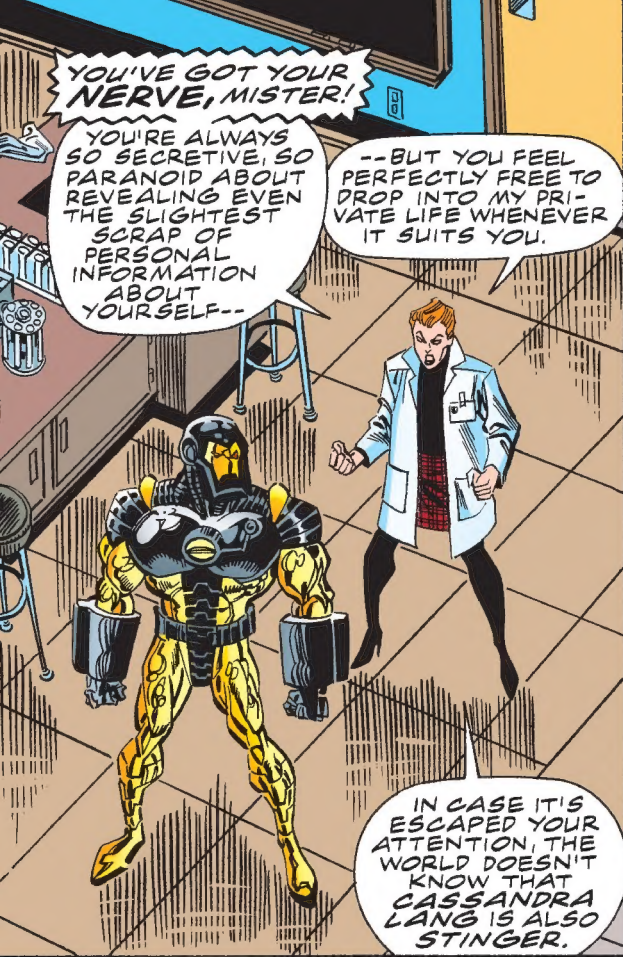
"HOW MANY TIMES HAD I SEEN THEM RUSH OFF TO COMBAT? HOW OFTEN HAD THEY CHALLENGED IMPOSSIBLE ODDS?"

"AND YET, EVEN AS THEY ENTERED THE JUMP-PORTAL THAT WOULD INSTANTLY TRANSPORT THEM TO THEIR LATEST BATTLEFIELD, I INSTINCTIVELY KNEW THAT THIS TIME WOULD BE DIFFERENT."



"AND-- GOD FORGIVE ME-- I DESPAIRED!"







CLUMSY ME! I'LL BET YOU PEOPLE WERE STILL USING THE WALL I JUST VAPORIZED!

DEFINITELY MY BAD!

COULD SOMEONE PLEASE POINT OUT DR. CASSANDRA LANG SO THAT I CAN APOLOGIZE IN PERSON?

W-WHO ARE YOU?

WHY DO YOU WANT CASS?



THE NAME I'VE BEEN GIVEN IS ION MAN.

A CORNY BUT DESCRIPTIVE DESIGNATION BECAUSE I CAN DO ALL SORTS OF NIFTY THINGS WITH ATOMIC PARTICLES.

HOWEVER, MY BUSINESS WITH LANG IS RATHER PERSONAL AND QUITE URGENT.

PLEASE PRODUCE HER BEFORE I LOSE PATIENCE, AND BEGIN TESTING THE LIMITS OF YOUR MEDICAL COVERAGE.

KWA-PWOOOM!



I AM AFRAID THAT MS. LANG IS OTHERWISE OCCUPIED AT THE MOMENT.

WOULD YOU CARE TO LEAVE A MESSAGE?

KWAHHH!

COME ON! I ASSUMED YOU WOULD HAVE A WITTY COMEBACK.

THE WAY YOU WERE GIVING ATTITUDE TO THE INNOCENT CIVILIANS BACK THERE, I TOOK YOU FOR THE TYPE WHO LIVES TO STYLE AND PROFILE.

MY MISTAKE! YOU ARE JUST A BULLY WITH A BIG MOUTH.

ACTUALLY...

YOU TOTALLY NAILED ME!

AND I CAN'T WAIT TO RETURN THE FAVOR!

WATCH OUT FOR FALLING AVENGERS, MR. LANG!

IF THIS JOKER CAN FLATTEN MAIN-FRAME--

--YOU NEED A HAND!

I'LL PULL OUT MY OLD ANT-MAN COSTUME, AND--

NEGATIVE! YOU EVACUATE THE BUILDING, AND LEAVE THE FIGHTING TO US!

EUGNNNE



"THEY ALSO
SERVE WHO
STAND AND
WAIT."

BUT THIS TIME THE
WAITING SEEMED TO
GO ON FOREVER.

I POLISHED SILVER,
VACUUMED RUGS AND
DUSTED BOOKSHELVES
UNTIL I THOUGHT I
WOULD GO MAD, AND
THEN I HEARD IT--

"-- AN ANGRY RUMBLE
ORIGINATING FROM THE
BASEMENT THAT HELD
THE JUMP-PORTAL!"

"WITHOUT HESITATION,
I RACED TO GREET THE
CONQUERING HEROES,
AND WELCOME THEM
HOME."



"BUT..."

"THE WORDS FROZE
IN MY THROAT."

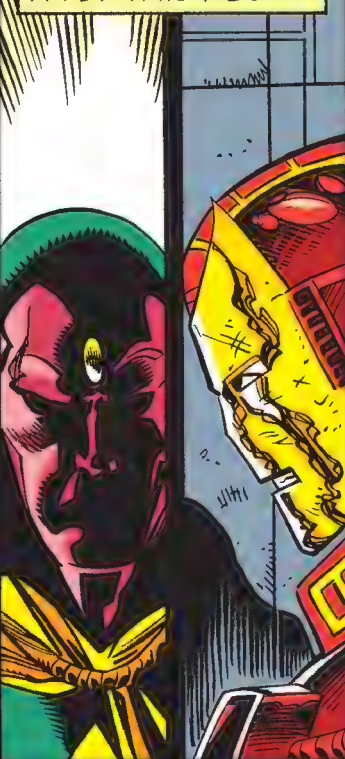


"THESE POOR
BEDRAGGLED FIGURES
BORE LITTLE RESEM-
BLANCE TO THE
AVENGERS OF ONLY
A FEW DAYS AGO..."

"THOSE BRAVE AND CON-
FIDENT CHAMPIONS WHO
HAD EMBARKED ON
ANOTHER GRAND
CRUSADE."

"THE FIRE HAD GONE
OUT OF THEIR EYES--

"--AND THEIR
SOULS SEEMED
NOTICEABLY
DIMMER."



W-WHERE ARE THE
OTHERS--?!

THERE ARE NO
OTHERS.

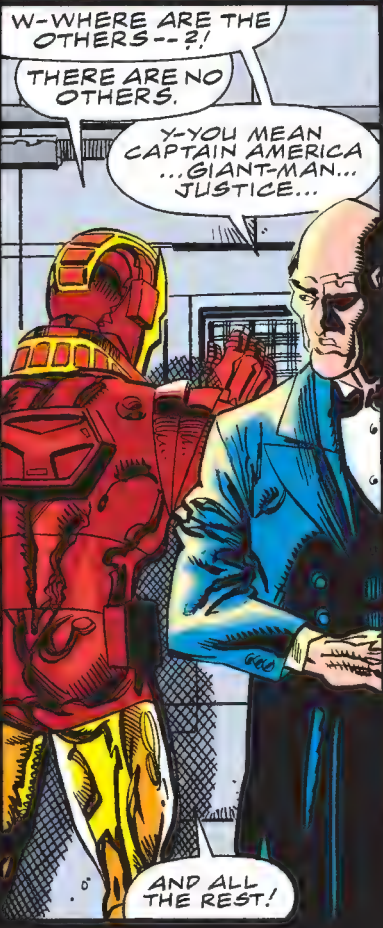
Y-YOU MEAN
CAPTAIN AMERICA
...GIANT-MAN...
JUSTICE...

M-MY GOD!

I NEVER IMAGINED...
NEVER WOULD HAVE
BELIEVED... THAT THE
AVENGERS... WOULD
EVER SUFFER SUCH
A TERRIBLE
DEFEAT.

APPEARANCES TO THE
CONTRARY, WE MAN-
AGED TO ACCOMPLISH
EVERYTHING WE SET
OUT TO DO.

THE EARTH IS SAFE,
OLD FRIEND.



W-WE...

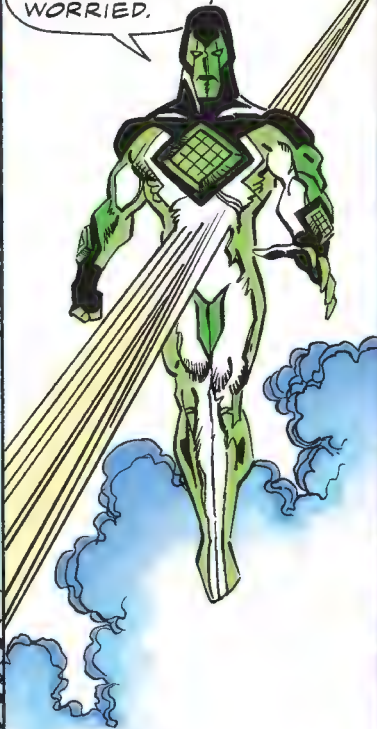
WE WON!

AND ALL
THE REST!



BUDDA!
BUDDA!
BUDDA!
BUDDA!

LIKE I'M
REALLLLLLY
WORRIED.



BE HONEST,
MAINFRAME...

BESIDES...

HAS ANY-
ONE EVER
FALLEN
FOR THAT
STUPID
LINE?!



SSSHRAKON!



I'M NOT THE ONE AT RISK!

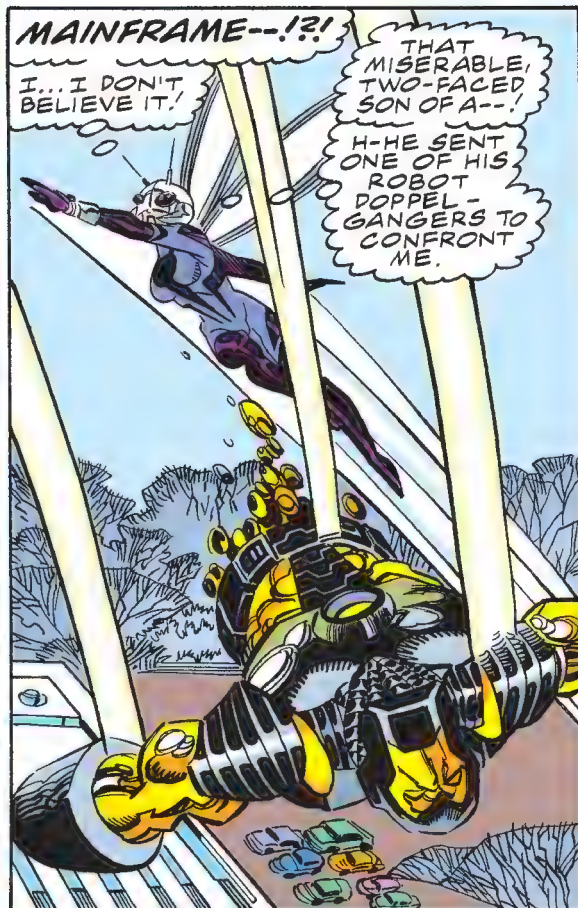
SSSHAAKKE!

MAINFRAME--!?!?

I... I DON'T
BELIEVE IT!

THAT
MISERABLE,
TWO-FACED
SON OF A--!

H-HE SENT
ONE OF HIS
ROBOT
DOPPEL-
GANGERS TO
CONFRONT
ME.



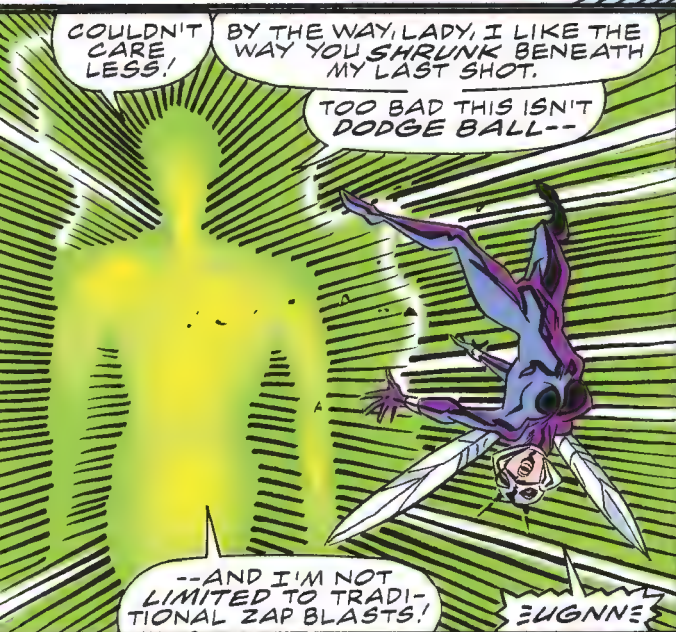


BUT I CAN'T WORRY ABOUT MAINFRAME NOW--!

ANOTHER AVENGER?!

I'VE REALLY GOTTA THANK THE BOSS LADY FOR SUCH A PRIMO ASSIGNMENT!

ANY IDEA WHY YOUR EMPLOYER HAS IT IN FOR CASSANDRA LANG?



COULDN'T CARE LESS!

BY THE WAY, LADY, I LIKE THE WAY YOU SHRUNK BENEATH MY LAST SHOT.

TOO BAD THIS ISN'T DODGE BALL--

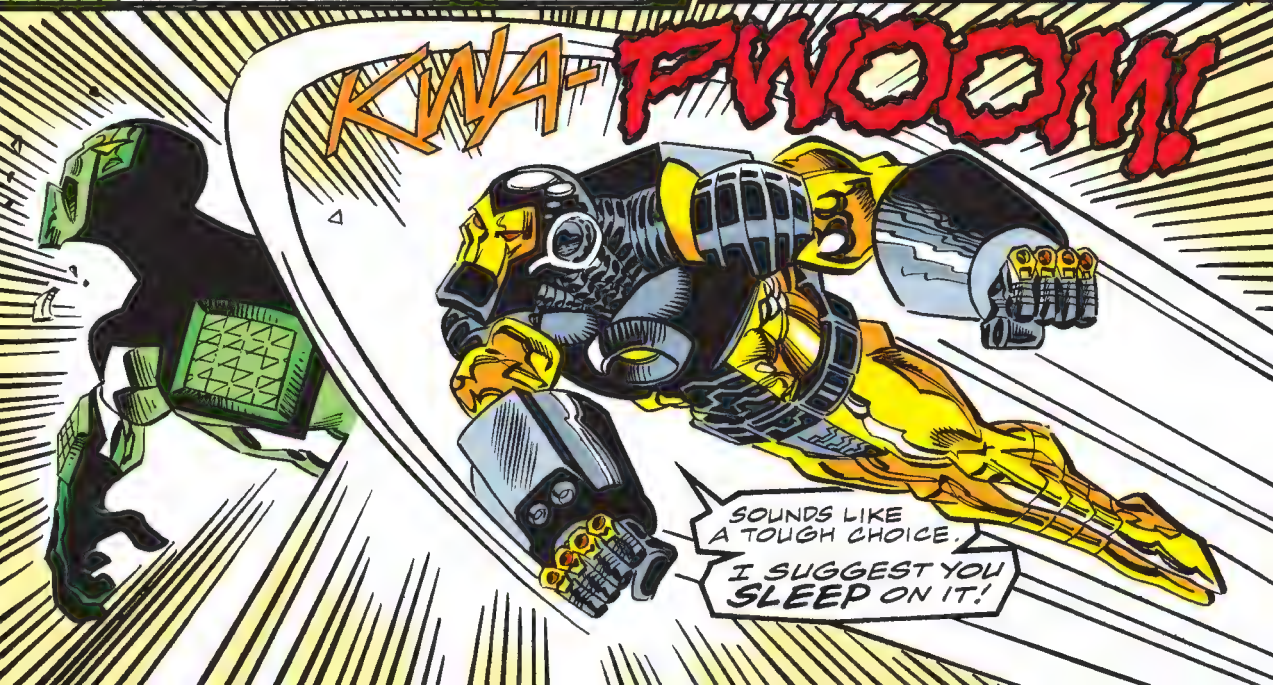
--AND I'M NOT LIMITED TO TRADITIONAL ZAP BLASTS!

EUGNEE

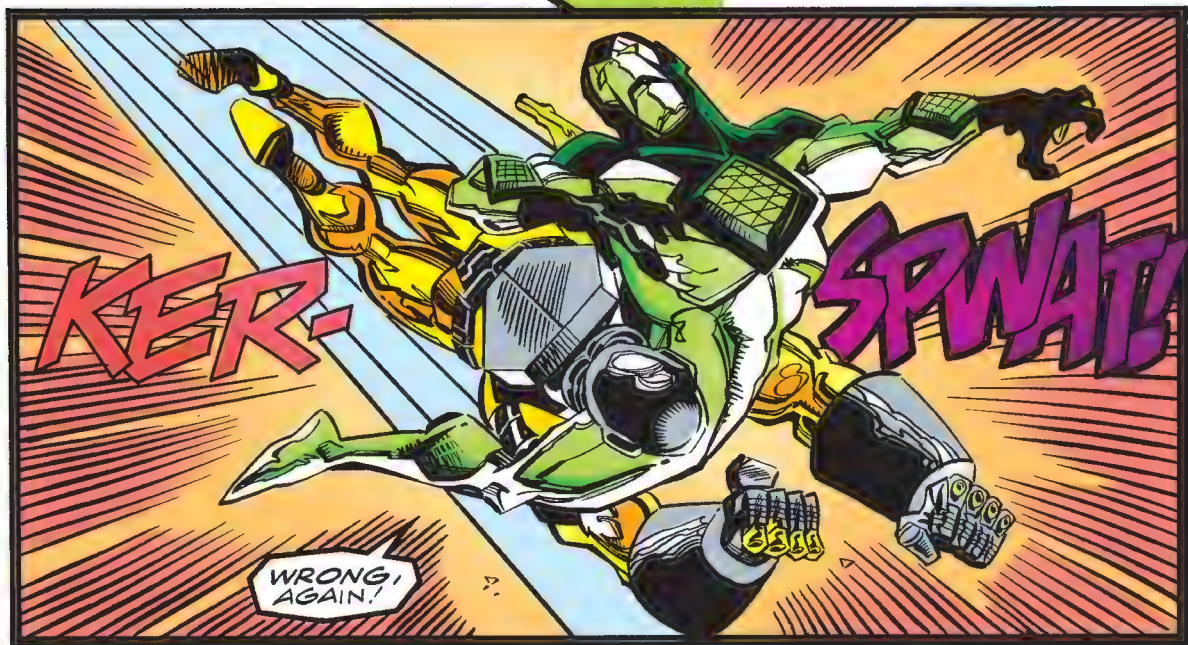
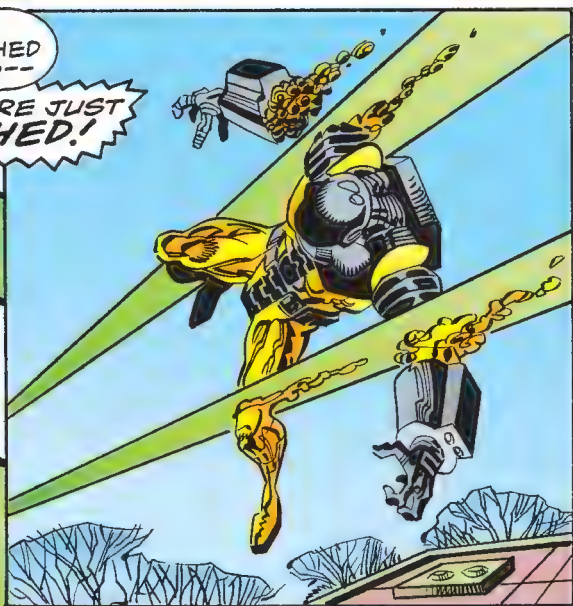
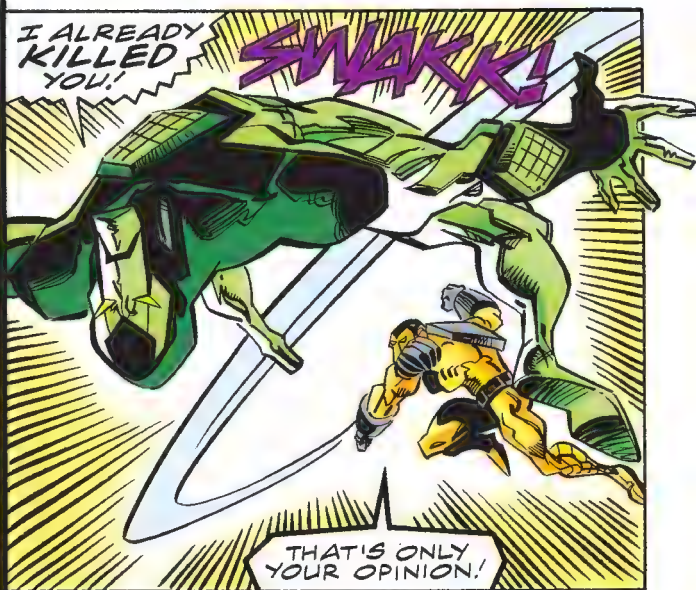
GREAT! SHE'S SO SMALL THAT I LOST HER IN THE DEBRIS.

DO I TRY TO FIND HER--

--OR RESUME THE SEARCH FOR MY PRIMARY TARGET?!



SOUNDS LIKE A TOUGH CHOICE. I SUGGEST YOU SLEEP ON IT!



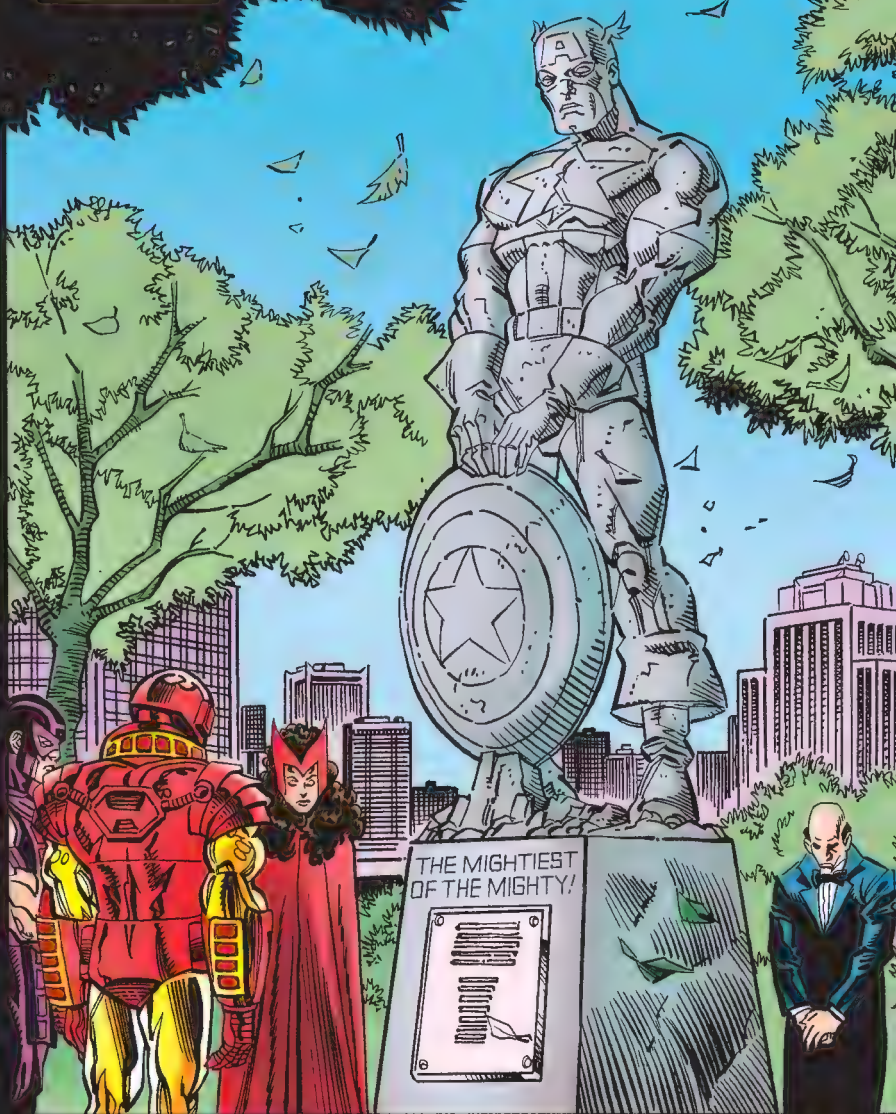
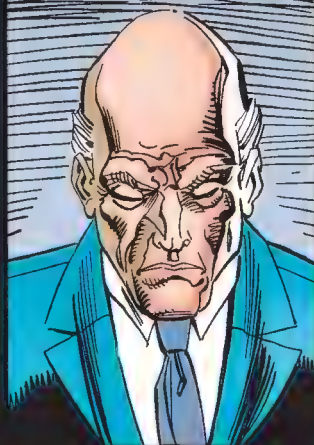
WHAT MORE
NEEDS TO BE
SAID?

A PRESS
CONFERENCE
WAS GIVEN,
AND THE WORLD
LEARNED OF
THE TRAGEDY.

THERE
WAS A VAST
OUTPOURING
OF GRIEF--

--AND A FLURRY
OF PUBLIC
MEMORIALS AND
MONUMENTS.

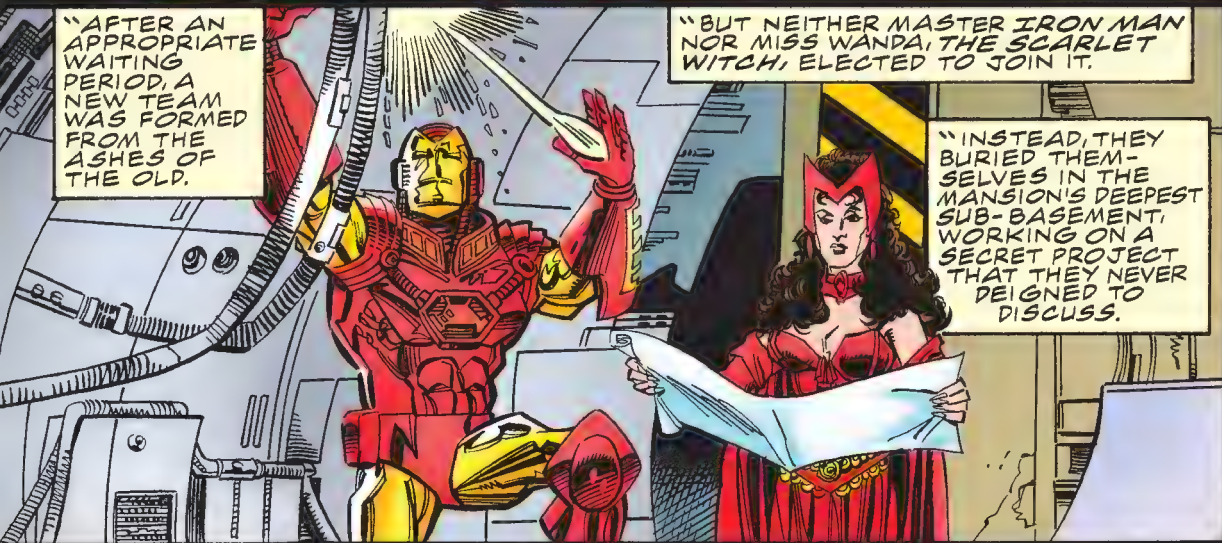
"FOR THEIR PART, THE
REMAINING AVENGERS
PREFERRED TO MOURN
THEIR FALLEN COMRADES
IN PRIVATE.



"AFTER AN
APPROPRIATE
WAITING
PERIOD, A
NEW TEAM
WAS FORMED
FROM THE
ASHES OF
THE OLD.

"BUT NEITHER MASTER IRON MAN
NOR MISS WANDA, THE SCARLET
WITCH, ELECTED TO JOIN IT.

"INSTEAD, THEY
BURIED THEM-
SELVES IN THE
MANSION'S DEEPEST
SUB-BASEMENT,
WORKING ON A
SECRET PROJECT
THAT THEY NEVER
DEIGNED TO
DISCUSS.



"WEEKS MELTED INTO MONTHS, AND STILL THEY TOILED. THE NEW GROUP OF AVENGERS WERE STILL STRUGGLING TO FIND THEIR OWN WAY WHEN--"



"I RECOGNIZED THAT ENRAGED ROAR! THE JUMP-PORTAL HAD BEEN REOPENED, BUT WHY?"



MASTER IRON MAN!

WHAT'S HAPPENING, SIR?

A-ARE WE UNDER ATTACK?!

THERE IS NOTHING TO FEAR, OLD FRIEND. NO ENEMY WILL EVER BE ABLE TO STRIKE AT US THROUGH THIS PORTAL.

IT IS SEALED... FOREVER.

W-WHERE IS MISS WANDA?

SHE IS... GONE... FOR NOW.

BUT I'M GOING TO DEDICATE THE REST OF MY LIFE TO FINDING A WAY TO ASSURE HER SAFE RETURN.



I NEED ONE LAST FAVOR, OLD FRIEND.

PLEASE PACK MY PERSONAL BELONGINGS.

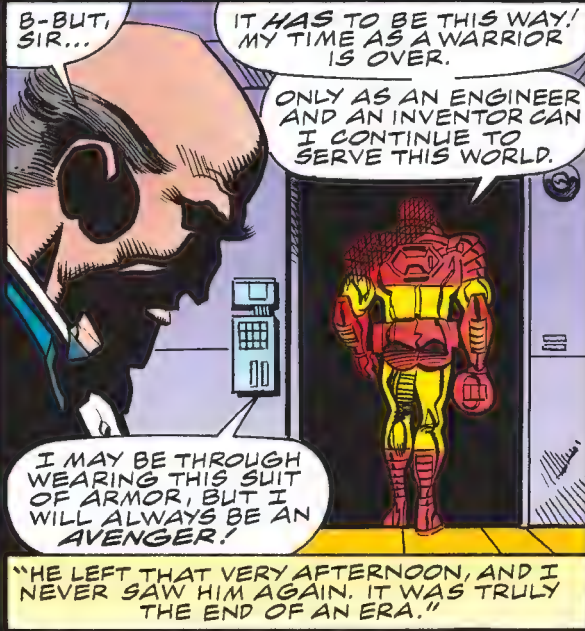
IRON MAN'S WORK IS NOW DONE--

--AND TONY STARK'S IS JUST BEGINNING.

B-BUT, SIR...

IT HAS TO BE THIS WAY! MY TIME AS A WARRIOR IS OVER.

ONLY AS AN ENGINEER AND AN INVENTOR CAN I CONTINUE TO SERVE THIS WORLD.



BLA! BLA!
BLA!

THIS IS GETTING REAL
OLD, METAL HEAD!

EXACTLY HOW
MANY SPARE BODIES
DO YOU OWN?

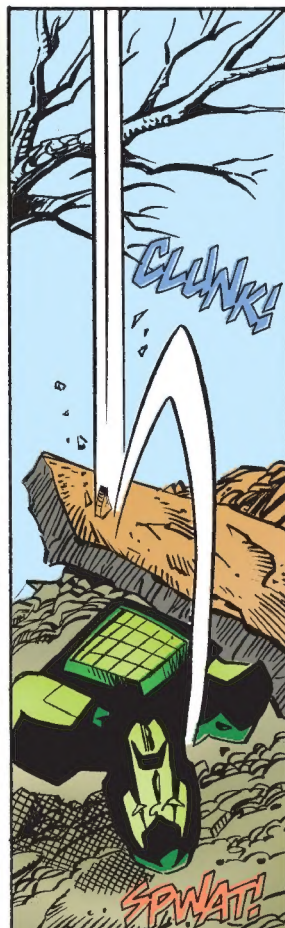
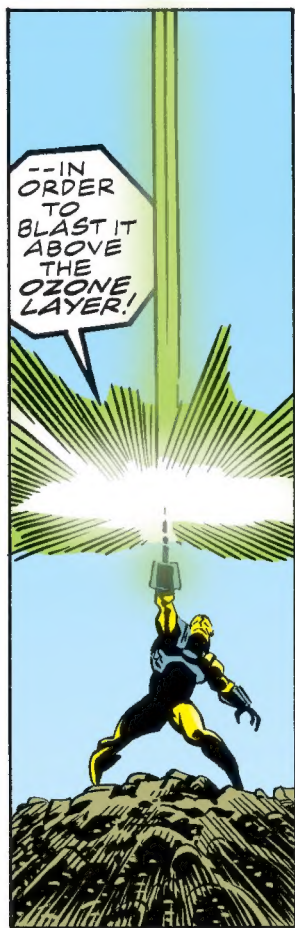
JUST ENOUGH
TO ENSURE YOUR
DEFEAT!

AS IF!

IN CASE YOU
HAVEN'T NOTICED,
I'M SLICING AND
DICING AS FAST
AS YOU'RE
SERVING!

SO IT WOULD
APPEAR--!

HOWEVER, EACH
NEW BODY HAS
BEEN ANALYZING
AND MONITORING
YOUR DISTINCTIVE
ENERGY
FLUXES--



THOUGH THEY TRULY TRIED TO LIVE UP TO THE PROUD TRADITION ESTABLISHED BY THE ORIGINAL AVENGERS, THE NEW MEMBERS NEVER QUITE JELLED.

SLOWLY, FOR PERFECTLY LEGITIMATE REASONS--

--FEWER AND FEWER ANSWERED THE CALL TO ASSEMBLE--

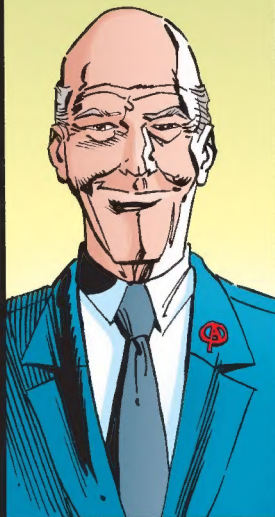
--UNTIL THERE WAS NO ONE LEFT TO SOUND IT!



AT LEAST UNTIL YOU ARRIVED!

AS MASTER IRON MAN OFTEN SAID...

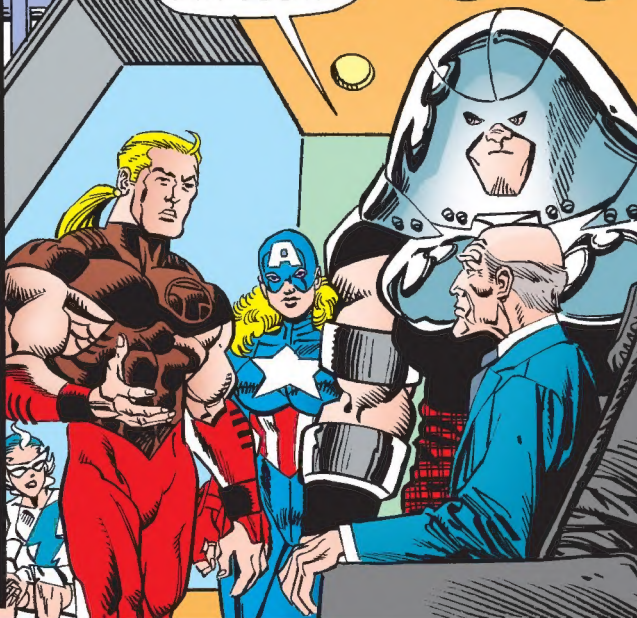
THERE WILL ALWAYS BE AVENGERS WHEN THE NEED ARISES!



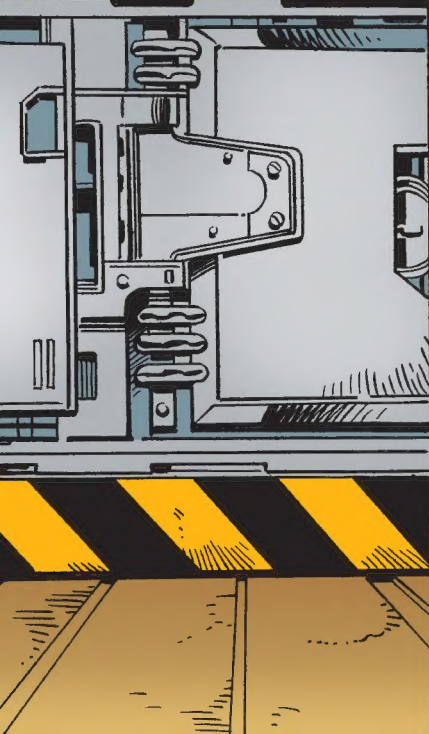
COULD THE HALLUCINATIONS THAT OUR PEOPLE EXPERIENCED BE RELATED--IN SOME WAY-- TO THE MYSTERIOUS JUMP-PORTAL THAT IRON MAN AND THE SCARLET WITCH ATTEMPTED TO SEAL?

I-IT IS CERTAINLY POSSIBLE, MASTER THUNDERSTRIKE...

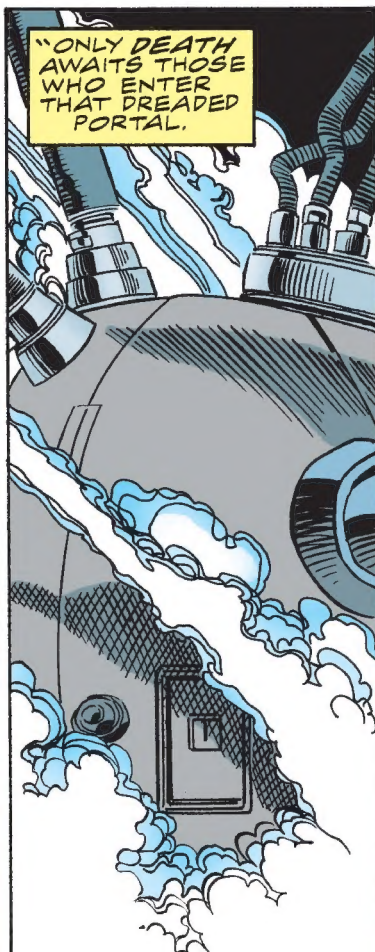
BUT, IF THAT IS THE CASE, I WARN YOU TO AVOID IT AT ANY COST...



"THE ORIGINAL AVENGERS HAD FAR MORE EXPERIENCE THAN YOU YOUNG PEOPLE, AND ONLY A HANDFUL OF THEM SURVIVED THEIR ENCOUNTER WITH IT!"



"ONLY DEATH AWAITS THOSE WHO ENTER THAT DREADED PORTAL."



"DEATH AND DESPAIR!"

